

Message Text

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51

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

USMISSION BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

USDEL SALT TWO GENEVA UNN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 13615

VIENNA FOR USDEL MBFR

GENEVA FOR USDEL CSCE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US

SUBJECT: BREZHNEV ON DETENTE AND U.S.

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1. SUMMARY. AGAINST BACKGROUND OF ME CRISIS AND
U.S. ALERT, BREZHNEV'S REFERENCES TO DETENTE AND
TO THE U.S. IN HIS OCTOBER 26 SPEECH BEAR CAREFUL
STUDY. WE SEE THEM AS REFLECTING A CONTINUED FIRM

COMMITMENT TO DETENTE BUT WITH AN IMPLICATION THAT ON SOME SPECIFIC ISSUES THE SOVIET POSITION MAY BE HARDENING. NOTABLY, BREZHNEV'S HARPING ON THE EVILS OF INTERFERENCE IN SOVIET INTERNAL AFFAIRS HAD AN ALMOST OBSESSIONAL QUALITY. HIS SPECIFIC REFERENCES AND ALLUSIONS TO THE U.S. ALSO REFLECT A DUALITY - NO DEFLECTION FROM THE POLICY OF GOOD RELATIONS BUT AN INCREASED WILLINGNESS TO BE CRITICAL ON SPECIFIC ISSUES. IN SUM, WHILE BREZHNEV ANNOUNCED NO CHANGES IN THE POLICY OF DETENTE, A NEW TONE OF NEGATIVISM SEEMS TO BE CREEPING INTO HIS LANGUAGE. THE OCTOBER 26 SPEECH MAY PRESAGE A HARDER LOOK BY THE LEADERSHIP AT SOVIET POLICY TOWARD THE U.S.
END SUMMARY.

2. BREZHNEV GAVE SOVIET RELATIONS WITH THE WEST A SURPRISING AMOUNT OF ATTENTION IN A SPEECH BEFORE A LARGELY THIRD-WORLD AUDIENCE AND AT A TIME OF CRISIS IN A REGION OF THE THIRD WORLD. HIS OVERVIEW WAS BASED ON WHAT HE CALLED "HISTORICAL OPTIMISM": "IT IS OUR DEEP CONVICTION THAT THE CURRENT TURN FROM COLD WAR TO DETENTE, FROM MILITARY CONFRONTATION TO A STABILIZING OF SECURITY AND PEACEFUL COOPERATION, IS THE MAIN TENDENCY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRESENT-DAY INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS" HE CREDITED WESTERN STATESMEN, AS WELL AS HIS SOCIALIST COLLEAGUES, FOR THIS PROGRESS, AND HE REITERATED EARLIER EXHORTATIONS THAT THE PROCESS MUST BE MADE IRREVERSIBLE. HE EVEN TOOK A STATESMANLIKE APPROACH TOWARD "ACERTAIN INCONSISTENCY IN THE ATTITUDES OF SOME STATES," SAYING ONLY THAT THEY PROVED FURTHER PROGRESS WOULD NOT BE EASY. FINALLY, HE SPOKE EVENLY OF THE OBSTACLES TO TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF- "LONG YEARS OF COLD WAR, ...PREJUDICE AND SUSPICION, FAULTY KNOWLEDGE, EVEN A RELUCTANCE TO KNOW THE REAL POSITIONS AND POSSIBILITIES OF OTHERS" -AND HE LEFT
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THE IMPLICATION THAT THESE WERE PROBLEMS FOR THE USSR AS WELL AS THE WEST.

3. BREZHNEV ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT HE STILL CONSIDERS ECONOMIC COOPERATION A STAPLE ITEM IN HIS DETENTE POLICY. HE EMPHASIZED THAT HE WAS NOT REFERRING SIMPLY TO TRADE BUT TO "MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL, LONG-TERM, AND LARGE SCALE ECONOMIC COOPERATION, BOTH BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL." HE WAS CANDID ABOUT THE REASON: "KEEPINT ABREAST OF THE REQUIREMENTS AND POSSIBILITIES OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION."

4. BENEATH THIS CANOPY OF OPTIMISM, HOWEVER, BREZHNEV

STAKED OUT A TOUGH POSITION ON EAST-WEST CONTACTS. HIS TREATMENT OF CSCE (WHICH, IN A BOW TO REALISM, OMITTED THE USUAL SOVIET EXHORTATION FOR THE CONFERENCE TO HURRY UP) MADE NO BOW AT ALL TO BASKET THREE ISSUES. INSTEAD BREZHNEV LAUNCHED INTO A LONG AND REPETITIOUS DIATRIB AGAINST THE ALLEGED CAMPAIGN TO INTERFERE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF SOCIALIST COUNTRIES. INDEED HE SPENT MORE TIME ON THIS THEME THAN HE SPENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST. THERE WAS A GLIMMER OF THE MORE POSITIVE TONE OF THE AUGUST ALMA ATA SPEECH IN HIS ASSERTION THAT "WE HAVE NO REASON TO SHUN ANY SERIOUS DISCUSSIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS" AND IN HIS REFERENCE TO THE RECENT SOVIET RATIFICATION OF TWO HUMAN RIGHTS COVENANTS. BUT EVEN HERE HE BACK-PEDALLED BY ENUMERATING IN DETAIL THE RESTRICTIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS IN THE COVENANTS.

5. PARTICULARLY DISTURBING WAS BREZHNEV'S ESCALATION OF THE OFFICIAL RHETORIC ON ATTEMPTS AT INTERNAL INTERFERENCE- NOT ONLY DO THEY THREATEN DETENTE, HE SAID,BUT PEACE AS WELL. SOME, HE SAID, "CLAIM THAT DETENTE IS IMPOSSIBLE UNLESS THERE ARE CHANGES IN THE INTERNAL ORDER OF SOCIALIST COUNTRIES. OTHERS LEAVE THE IMPRESSION OF NOT ACTUALLY OPPOSING DETENTE, BUT DECLARE WITH AMAZING FRANKNESS THEIR INTENTION TO USE THE PROCESS OF DETENTE TO WEAKEN THE SOCIALIST SYSTEM AND ULTIMATELY TO DESTROY IT." CONFIDENTIAL

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HE ASSERTED THAT NO ONE CAN SUBVERT THE SOCIALIST WORLD BUT - BECAUSE PEACE DEPENDS IN PART ON NON-INTERFERENCE - "IT IS STILL POSSIBLE TO SUBVERT PEACE."

6. BREZHNEV LEFT NO DOUBT OF THE IMPORTANCE HE CONTINUES TO ATTACH TO SOVIET RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES. HE SINGLED THE U.S. OUT FOR POSITIVE COMMENTS TWICE IN THE SPEECH AND REFERRED APPROVINGLY TO ALL THREE OF HIS MEETINGS WITH THE PRESIDENT (PAST AND FUTURE).

7. AT THE SAME TIME HE SHOWED LESS CONFIDENCE IN U.S. MOTIVES THAN HE HAD IN EARLIER STATEMENTS. REFERRING TO SOVIET INTENTIONS TO OBSERVE THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES AND OTHER BILATERAL AGREEMENTS, HE ADDED: "WE EXPECT THE OTHER SIDE TO DO LIKEWISE." CITING THE EFFORTS OF "CERTAIN IRRESPONSIBLE POLITICIANS" TO DICTATE TERMS TO THE USSR, HE ABSOLVED THE U.S. GOVERNMENT OF THIS BUT DID SAY THAT BILATERAL COOPERATION DEPENDED ON "A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND GOOD FAITH." HE WAS CAUSTIC ABOUT ATTEMPTS (UNATTRIBUTED) TO WIN "BARGAINING CHIPS" AT SALT BY INCREASING MILITARY BUDGETS. HE USED

THE TERM "ARMED INTERVENTION OF US. IMPERIALISM"
IN REFERRING TO VIETNAM. AND ON THE ME, THE U.S.
WAS THE OBVIOUS TARGET OF HIS ASSERTIONS THAT
"CERTAIN CIRCLES IN NATO COUNTRIES" ARE SPREADING
"FANTASTIC RUMORS" ABOUT SOVIET INTENTIONS, THAT
ISRAEL WAS ENCOURAGED BY "EXTERNAL FORCES," AND THAT
"OUTSIDE PATRONAGE" WAS PLAYING A ROLE IN ISRAELI
ADVENTURISM.

8. IN THE CONTEXT OF A TRAUMATIC WEEK, BREZHNEV'S
DECLARATIONS OF COMMITMENT TO DETENTE ARE
UNDOUBTEDLY MORE IMPORTANT THAN HIS INTRODUCTION OF
A FEW NEGATIVE REFERENCES TO THE WAY DETENTE IS
ACTUALLY WORKING ITSELF OUT. THIS SPEECH, FOR
EXAMPLE, IS FAR Milder TOWARD THE U.S. THAN HIS
50TH ANNIVERSARY SPEECH OF LAST DECEMBER, DELIVERED
WHEN THE U.S. WAS STILL BOMBING NORTH VIETNAM.
NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS A NEGATIVE UNDERTONE
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IN THE OCTOBER 26 SPEECH AND WE BELIEVE IT MAY
REFLECT MORE THAN JUST A WILLINGNESS TO REVIVE SOME
ASPECTS OF EARLIER PUBLIC POLEMICS. WE SUSPECT IT
MAY ALSO INDICATE THAT THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP WILL BE
TAKING A NEW AND HARDER LOOK AT THE SPECIFIC ASPECTS
OF ITS DETENTE POLICY- PARTICULARLY AS IT APPLIES
TO THE U.S.
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